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**58581**

NSC Review Completed.

ACTION NO.

NNNNVV EIC359KLF326

RR RUEAIIB

ZNY CCCCC ZOC STATE ZZH

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DE RUMJNO 0967 0481235

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R 171154Z FEB 72

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6468

INFO RUMJIR/AMEMBASSY SAIGON 2929

BT

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 0967

EXDIS

DEPT PASS NSC

SAIGON PASS TO SIR ROBERT THOMPSON

SUBJECT: VISIT OF SIR ROBERT THOMPSON TO PHNOM PENH

1. SUMMARY: SIR ROBERT THOMPSON, ACCOMPANIED BY DESMOND PALMER, VISIT PHNOM PENH FEBRUARY 14-16 FOR A FIRST-HAND APPRAISAL OF THE SITUATION, SIR ROBERT'S THIRD SUCH VISIT SINCE SEPTEMBER 1970. INSOFAR AS WE CAN TELL SIR ROBERT REACHED NO STARTLING CONCLUSIONS. HE COMMENTED, HOWEVER, ON THE APPARENT ABSENCE OF A VIABLE KHMER STRATEGY FOR THE PROLONGED WAR WHICH HE BELIEVES MUST INEVITABLY BE WAGED HERE. SIR ROBERT WILL REPORT PERSONALLY ON THEIR FINDINGS TO THE NSC ON OR ABOUT MARCH 5. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING THEIR THREE WORKING DAYS SIR ROBERT AND MR. PALMER WERE BRIEFED BY THE AMBASSADOR AND ALL SECTION CHIEFS; VISIT FANK POSITIONS AT SKOUN, TAING KAU, AND KOMPONG CHAM; MET PRIVATELY WITH THE AUSTRALIAN AND BRITISH AMBASSADOR AND THEIR STAFFS; MADE AN OFFICIAL CALL ON SISOWATH SIRIK MATAK (LON NOL IS VACATIONING IN KOMPONG SOM); ATTENDED A FANK BRIEFING; AND DISCUSSED MILITARY MATTERS WITH MAJGEN SAK SUTSAKHAN. THEY CONVERSED AT SOCIAL FUNCTIONS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER KOUN WICK, MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS KHY TAING LIM, MINISTER OF EDUCATION PAN SOTHI, PRESIDENT OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY IN TAM, ASSEMBLY MEMBER ONG SIM, FORMER PTT MINISTER UM SIM, ISRAELI AMBASSADOR GALBAR, MAJOR GENERAL POK

GAC JPH WAC EFH

JHW JJM JFR POO

EKH MEE LCP DSS

LJS JES

D

State Dept. review completed

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SAM AN, AND BGEN MOUL KLENG (COMMANDER, MILITARY REGION ONE).

3. SIR ROBERT'S CONVERSATION WITH SIRIK MATAK DEVELOPED SEVERAL THEMES, THE MOST SIGNIFICANT OF WHICH WERE THESE.

A. SIR ROBERT STRESSED REPEATEDLY HIS VIEW THAT HANOI WILL NOT ACCEPT A CEASE FIRE, WILL NOT ENGAGE IN MEANINGFUL NEGOTIATIONS BEFORE THE US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, AND HAS EVERY INTENTION OF PURSUING THE WAR. THE KHMER MUST THEREFORE READY THEMSELVES FOR PROLONGED WARFARE WITH THE ENEMY, CYCLICAL IN CHARACTER BUT UNREMITTING IN ENEMY PURSUIT OF ULTIMATE OBJECTIVES. THE KHMER MUST BE ABLE TO ESTABLISH WHAT SIR ROBERT TERMED QTE A STATE OF STABLE WAR UNQTE IN WHICH THE POPULATION UNDER FRIENDLY CONTROL IS MOBILIZED FOR SELF-DEFENSE, KEY LOC'S ARE KEPT OPEN, AND A BASE OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STABILITY IS ATTAINED; FROM THIS BASE FRIENDLY CONTROL MUST BE GRADUALLY EXTENDED TO ENEMY HELD AREAS. SIR ROBERT COMMENTED THAT HE HAS LITTLE PATIENCE WITH THE CONCEPT OF FIGHTING JUST HARD ENOUGH TO HAVE A BARGAINING SEAT IN NEGOTIATIONS. HE REPEATED THAT THERE WILL VERY LIKELY BE NO NEGOTIATIONS GIVEN HANOI'S POLICIES AND FUNDAMENTAL OUTLOOK AND THAT THE KHMER MUST THEREFORE SUSTAIN THEIR WILL TO RESIST AND FURTHER DEVELOP IT OVER THE LONG TERM. HE IMPLIED THAT NATIONAL SURVIVAL IS AT STAKE.

B. SIRKI MATAK LISTENED SOBERLY TO THESE BLUNT AND RATHER BLEAK PREDICTIONS, OFFERING NO IMMEDIATE COMMENT. HE THEN OBSERVED THAT THERE HAVE BEEN INCREASING SIGNS OF ASIAN REGIONAL COLLABORATION AND THAT HE BELIEVES THE THAI, THE LAO, THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE, AND THE KHMER WILL EVENTUALLY HAVE TO POOL THEIR MANPOWER AND RESOURCES IN A MORE COORDINATED POLITICAL AND MILITARY EFFORT THAN HAS YET BEEN ACHIEVED. HE MENTIONED THE DJAKARTA CONFERENCE OF 1970 AND THE MOST RECENT MEETING OF ASEAN AS MANIFESTATIONS OF THE IMPULSE TO REGIONAL COLLABORATION. SIR ROBERT COMMENTED THAT POLITICAL SOLIDARITY IS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT TO ACHIEVE THAN MILITARY COLLABORATION SINCE THE DETERMINATION OF THE PEOPLES OF THE AREA TO BE FREE FROM ALIEN DOMINATION MUST BE THE BASE FOR ANY MULTILATERAL MILITARY EFFORTS.

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C. SIRIK MATAK QUESTIONED SIR ROBERT CONCERNING HIS ASSESSMENT OF HANOI'S ABILITY TO WAGE WAR INDEFINITELY. SIR ROBERT REPLIED THAT NO ASSESSMENT IS POSSIBLE; ONE CAN ONLY SPECULATE. THE LEADERSHIP IN POWER IN HANOI IS STILL THAT OF THE FIRST GENERATION OF COMMUNIST-NATIONALISTS. THEIR SUCCESSORS MAY FOLLOW DIFFERENT POLICIES. COMMUNIST CHINA IS ALREADY IN TRANSITION, EVEN BEFORE THE DEATH OF MAO. THE SOVIET UNION MAY NOT WISH TO CONTINUE INDEFINITELY ITS ANNUAL IMPUT OF MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE EQUALING A BILLION US DOLLARS, ESPECIALLY IF THE OUTLOOK IS THAT OF STALEMATE. IN SEASIA AS A WHOLE, JAPAN WILL OBVIOUSLY BE PLAYING AN ENLARGED AND HOPEFULLY CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE AS THE DECADE PROGRESSES.

D. A GOOD PART OF THE CONVERSATION REVOLVED AROUND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A VIABLE STRATEGY FOR THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR IN CAMBODIA. AMONG OTHER POINTS SIR ROBERT STRESSED THE NEED TO KEEP OPEN VITAL LINES OF COMMUNICATION, MENTIONING THE MEKONG AS FIRST PRIORITY AND ROUTES 5 AND 4. SIRIK MATAK INTERJECTED THE VIEW THAT ROUTE 4 TO KOMPONG SOM SHOULD BE GIVEN FIRST PRIORITY. HE ADDUCED THE VULNERABILITY OF THE MEKONG TO BLOCKAGE DURING THE LOW WATER SEASON AND THE LENGTH OF THE WATER ROUTE AS COMPARED TO DIRECT OCEANGOING DELIVERIES TO KOMPONG SOM. SIR ROBERT ARGUED THE COMPARATIVE ECONOMY OF RIVER TRANSPORT AND ITS SUITABILITY FOR LIFTING BULK COMMODITIES. WHILE NO EXPLICIT MEETING OF MINDS WAS ACHIEVED, IT WAS TACITLY AGREED THAT BOTH LOC'S ARE TOP PRIORITIES. SIR ROBERT ALSO SUGGESTED THE DESIRABILITY OF CLEARING ROUTES 2 AND 3 SOUTH OF PHNOM PENH, OBSERVING THAT THE INDO-CHINESE WAR MUST BE PERCEIVED AS A WHOLE AND THAT IF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE DELTA COULD BE MADE YET MORE SECURE ARVN FORCES COULD BE REDEPLOYED FOR VITALLY IMPORTANT OPERATIONS AGAINST ENEMY CONCENTRATIONS IN NORTH-ERN SVN AND IN THE LAOS PANHANDLE.

E. SIRIK MATAK LISTENED ATTENTIVELY TO THESE SUGGESTIONS AND EXPRESSED HIS GENERAL AGREEMENT WITH THEM. HE NOTED THAT SMALL COMBINED ARVN-FANK OPERATIONS HAVE ALREADY BEEN CONDUCTED IN THE TAKEO AREA AND THAT SEVERAL CONVOYS HAVE BEEN USING A COMBINATION

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OF ROUTES 3 AND 15# BETWEEN KAMPOT AND PHNOM PENH. HE SAID THAT HE HAD ALSO RECENTLY DESPATCHED A TEAM OF MINISTERS AND TECHINCIAINS TO SURVEY A SECTION OF ROUTE 5 WHICH IS IN NEED OF URGENT REPAIR IN ORDER THAT RICE AND OTHER SUPPLIES CAN FLOW UNINTERRUPTEDLY BETWEEN BATTAMBANG AND THE CAPITAL.

4. SIR ROBERT AND MR. PALMER DID NOT DISCUSS WITH US AT ANY LENGTH THE JUDGMENTS DERIVED FROM OTHER CONVERSATIONS OR BRIEFINGS. WE WERE FULLY CANDID IN EXPRESSING OUR CONCERN TO THEM OVER LON NOL'S STILL QUIXOTIC LEADERSHIP, THE INADEQUATE MOBILIZATION OF THE CIVILIAN SECTOR BEHIND THE WAR, THE PROBLEM OF LEADERSHIP IN FANK UNITS. THE POOR EFFORT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, AND OTHER NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE SITUATION; BUT WE ALSO NOTED SUCH POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS AS RELATIVE STABILIZATION OF THE ECONOMY, THE GOOD MORALE AND FIGHTING QUALITIES OF FANK TRAINEES, AND THE RESTORATION OF VIABLE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LON NOL AND SIRIK MATAK. WE GAVE AS OUR JUDGMENT THAT THE WILL TO RESIST, ALTHOUGH WEAKENED BY GROWING DOUBT AND UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE FUTURE, IS STILL STRONG; AND WE POINTED OUT THAT ITS PRINCIPAL INSTRUMENT OF EXPRESSION, THE ARMED FORCES, ARE STEADILY IF SLOWLY IMPROVING MSWANK  
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